

Application No.: 09/184,55

an output gear coupled to the axial extension for meshing with a drive gear connected to the second axle and provided with an axial recess forming radially displaced internal and external bearing surfaces disposed substantially in the same radial plane as the second bearing member.

10. (New) The drive unit of claim 9, further comprising tapered roller bearings seated on the first and second bearing members and on the external bearing surface.

11. (New) The drive unit of claim 10, wherein the second and third roller bearings are disposed such the apex of their pressure cones coincides with the axis of the output gear.

12. (New) The drive unit of claim 11, wherein the external bearing member is disposed withing the second bearing.

Claim 5, line 1: change "1" to --9--; and
claim 7, line 1.

Remarks.

Claims 1 - 8 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being allegedly indefinite for failure particularly to point out and distinctly to claim the subject matter regarded by applicants as their invention.

Claims 1, 4, 5 and 7 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being allegedly anticipated by Hatano, U.S. Patent 4,779,699.

Claims 1-3, 5 and 8 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being

Application No.: 09/184,55

allegedly anticipated by Sasaki et al., U.S. Patent 4,645,029.

Claim 6 has been indicated to be allowable if rewritten to avoid the rejection under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, and to include all limitations of its base and intervening claims.

With a view to rendering their claims clear and succinct, Applicants have rewritten their claims 1 - 4 as new claims 9 - 12, and they have amended their original claims 5 and 7.

Applicants have noted with appreciation the allowability of their claim 6. However, after carefully considering the '699 and '029 patents they submit, with respect, that the Examiner appears to have misunderstood their invention. While both references relate to transaxle drive mechanisms for four-wheel drive systems, neither teaches or suggests the axially compact arrangement which is the subject matter of applicants' invention as defined in their new claim 9. In fact, neither Hatano nor Sasaki give any consideration to axially compact drive units made possible, in the language of Applicants' new main claim, by "an output gear coupled to the axial extension for meshing with a drive gear connected to the second axle and provided with an axial recess forming radially displaced internal and external bearing surfaces disposed substantially in the same radial plane as the second bearing member". Indeed, both Hatano and Sasaki disclose the elongate mechanisms common to prior art devices and fail to suggest, much less disclose, for an arrangement which can be mounted in an axial space smaller than the one required to accommodate bevel gear axle differentials used in conventional vehicles.

It is urged, with respect, that the radially coplanar arrangement of the


Application No.: 09/184,55

second and third bearings of Applicants' structure provided by the axial recess of their output gear is distinctly and patentably different from the axially extended arrangements taught by the two prior art references.

As regards the second axle which has been included in Applicants' claims but which has not been shown in the drawings, Applicants will be pleased to submit an amended drawing for approval by the Official Draftsman once a notice of allowability has been issued.


Applicants earnestly urge that their application as hereby amended is in condition for allowance which is courteously solicited.

Respectfully submitted,


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Date: 12 January 2000